



News Release

WISCONSIN ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Huge send-off planned for 680 Wisconsin National Guard infantry troops next week

Other community events scheduled in Eau Claire,
Menomonie, New Richmond, Arcadia, Neillsville, River Falls

State, local and military officials are planning one huge send-off ceremony and six hometown send-offs for about 680 Wisconsin Army National Guard soldiers who are being mobilized this weekend.

The soldiers are members of 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, headquartered in Eau Claire, with units in Abbotsford, Menomonie, New Richmond, Rice Lake, Arcadia, Neillsville and River Falls. They will be leaving Wisconsin Wednesday, June 23, for mobilization processing and several months of additional training at Camp Shelby, Miss., before deploying overseas for one full year — the first Wisconsin Army National Guard combat arms unit to be operationally deployed since World War II.

In the largest single send-off ceremony Wisconsin National Guard officials can remember, the entire battalion will gather with their families Wednesday, June 23, at Volk Field Air National Guard Base near Camp Douglas, Wis. Following a 10:30 a.m. ceremony inside a large aircraft hangar, soldiers will have a few final hours with their families until boarding one of four chartered airliners that will fly them to Mississippi.

The Volk Field send-off ceremony will be led by Lt. Gov. Barbara Lawton, Maj. Gen. Al Wilkening and Brig. Gen. Kerry Denson. Other senior military officials will also be on hand, along with elected public officials, friends and community supporters.

Music for the ceremony will be provided by the Guard's 132nd Army Band of Madison, which has played for similar send-off and welcome home events for Guard units from around the state.

Local send-offs in six of the battalion's communities will be held Sunday, June 20; Monday, June 21; and Tuesday, June 22.

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Planned community events include:

Arcadia — Company C (-)

Time: Sunday, June 20, 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Place: Arcadia Memorial Park (Soldier's Walk), Gavney Rd., Arcadia.

Expected Participants: U.S. Rep. Ron Kind, Wis. Rep. Barb Gronemus, Arcadia Mayor Gary Bautch, and other community leaders. Other invited participants have not yet been confirmed.

Neillsville — Detachment 1, Company C

Time: Sunday, June 20, 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Place: Clark County Fairgrounds, Neillsville.

Expected Participants: Neillsville Mayor Diane Murphy, former Wis. Rep. Van Gordon, and other community leaders. Other invited participants have not yet been confirmed.

River Falls — Company D

Time: Monday, June 21, 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Place: River Falls armory, 815 W. Division St., River Falls.

Menomonie — Company A

Time: Monday, June 21, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Place: Menomonie armory, 315 28th Ave. W., Menomonie.

Expected Participants: Wis. Sen. Dave Zien, Wis. Sen. Sheila Harsdorf, and Menomonie City Council President Dennis Cropp. Other invited participants have not yet been confirmed.

Eau Claire — Headquarters and Headquarters Company

Time: Tuesday, June 22, 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Place: Heartland Aviation hangar, 3800 Starr Ave. (at the Chippewa Valley Regional Airport), Eau Claire.

Expected Participants: Maj. Gen. Al Wilkening, Brig. Gen. Kerry Denson, Wis. Rep. Rob Kreibich, Wis. Rep. Scott Suder, Eau Claire City Manager Don Norrell, Chippewa Falls Mayor Douglas Sandvick, along with other state legislators, community leaders and retired Wisconsin National Guard general officers. Other invited participants have not yet been confirmed.

New Richmond — Company B (Note: Not open to general public)

Time: Tuesday, June 22, 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Place: New Richmond armory, 1245 Wall St., New Richmond.

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Expected Participants: New Richmond Mayor David Schnitzler, community leaders, and retired Wisconsin National Guard general officers. Other invited participants have not yet been confirmed.

Mobilization of 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry brings the total number of Wisconsin Army and Air National Guard members on active duty to about 1,400. Since Sept. 11, 2001, more than 4,200 soldiers and airmen from the Wisconsin National Guard — nearly 45 percent of the Guard's 9,900 member force — have served on active duty.

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Note to Editors and News Directors: News media are welcome to cover the send-off of 680 soldiers of 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry at Volk Field Wednesday, June 23.

Access to the base will be available after 9:00 a.m. Wednesday morning. The official send-off ceremony will begin at 10:30 a.m. and last approximately 30 minutes. Soldiers will depart Volk Field aboard four chartered civilian airliners during the afternoon. From the end of the ceremony until they are called to board a flight, soldiers and their families will have time together at the airfield. News media may conduct interviews with consenting soldiers and family members. Senior military officials and public affairs officers will also be available for questions.

News media organizations wishing to cover the Volk Field send-off event must call Tim Donovan (608-242-3050 or Cell 608-516-1777) so arrangements can be made for access to the military installation. Volk Field is located off Exit 55 on Interstate 90-94 in Juneau County.

Arrangements to cover any of the six community events can be made by contacting the local armory.

Current National Guard News Releases available at: <http://dma.wi.gov/news.asp>